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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0587
RUEHRG/AMCONSUL RECIFE 3859
RUEHRI/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO 8415
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC 2937
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RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
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STATE FOR WHA/BSC, DRL/ILCSR, INR/IAA, INR/R/AA
STATE ALSO FOR DS/IP/WHA, DS/DSS/ITA, DS/DSS/OSAC
STATE PASS USTR FOR KATE DUCKWORTH
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NSC FOR TOMASULO
TREASURY FOR JHOEK
USDOC FOR 4332/ITA/MAC/WH/OLAC
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SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
DOL FOR ILAB
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TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ELAB](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [ASEC](#) [BR](#)

SUBJECT: TWO KILLED IN MST LAND INVASION SKIRMISH

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - ADDED TAGS, SLUG LINE

REF: (A) SAO PAULO 367; (B) 06 SAO PAULO 1054
(C) 06 SAO PAULO 332

¶1. (U) Summary: Two people were shot dead and eight wounded Sunday in a clash between members of landless peoples' organizations and armed guards protecting a farm owned by the Swiss-owned biotech company Syngenta Seeds in Santa Tereza do Oeste, a small town about 340 miles west of Curitiba, the capital of Parana state. In addition to wanting the land for settlement, the landless movements that agitate for agrarian reform oppose and sometimes target companies like Syngenta that work with genetically modified organisms (GMOs). As of this writing, the invaders continue to occupy the 318-acre property. "Now keeping the area occupied is a question of honor," said one movement leader. Many observers believe that the actions and policies of Governor Roberto Requiiao, a populist who opposes GMOs, encourage the MST aggression that sometimes leads to loss of life. The incident reaffirms the role of Parana in southern Brazil as a frequent battlefield in Brazil's ongoing conflicts over land. End Summary.

¶2. (U) The clash occurred when a group of about 200 militants belonging to the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST) and Via Campesina attempted to occupy the Syngenta test farm early on the morning of October 21. Private security guards employed by the company tried to deter the invasion, and gunfire erupted. Killed in the shooting were Valmir Mota de Oliveira, aka Keno, 32, a leader of the MST in Parana state, and Fabio Ferreira, a 25-year-old security guard. Eight people were injured in the fray. Syngenta admitted

they had hired a security company to protect the farm but insisted that, per worldwide company policy, the force was supposed to be unarmed.

13. (U) The Syngenta property was first invaded by land reform activists in March 2006, when 600 Via Campesina activists occupied the farm to protest against the firm's research on genetically modified soybeans (ref C). A court order issued in July 2007 required the invaders to vacate the property, and they complied, but apparently decided to try again. Roberto Requiao, Governor of Parana and himself an opponent of GMOs - per ref B, in 2003 he declared Parana GMO-free and banned the transportation of GMO commodities through the state, causing a serious loss of business to the Port of Paranagua - supported the movement's actions and tried to expropriate the land for the state, alleging it was located in an area off-limits to GMO cultivation. The company ultimately prevailed in the courts against the state government, and Requiao was eventually forced to modify his anti-GMO stance.

14. (U) MST members claim they expelled a group of guards from the Syngenta property over the weekend but that the guards returned armed and on the offensive. "They came back shooting at us," said Celso Ribeiro Barbosa, an MST leader. For their part, the guards from the private security firm allege that the activists had captured a group of their colleagues so they went to get help and came back to rescue them. "When we arrived the activists shot at us. They were heavily armed," said Nerci de Freitas, owner of NF Security. In contrast with Syngenta officials, Freitas asserts that the guards are authorized to carry guns on the job.

15. (U) As of the morning of October 30, the invaders are reportedly still occupying the Syngenta property. They may well remain there until the owners can get another court order. Police are

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investigating Sunday's incident and have seven guards in custody on charges of murder and criminal gang formation. They have also arraigned Freitas on suspicion of the intentional murder of the MST militant. Parana's Secretary of Public Security characterized NF Security as an armed militia working in concert with landowners' associations. Police arrested but subsequently released four landless movement activists who took part in the conflict. The Parana Bar Association attributed the clash to the ideological treatment given by the state government to land conflicts, recalling that the government sometimes disobeys or defers action on court orders to expel land invaders, which the Bar believes encourages more invasions and armed conflicts.

16. (U) In a separate incident, media report that nine people were wounded October 24 in clashes between military police and MST members in the area of Coqueiros do Sul and Carazinho in northern Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil's southernmost state and another site of frequent land invasions. According to Military Brigade spokesmen, some 600 MST members were blocking portions of a highway and trying to force their way into the town of Almirante Tamandare do Sul, about 190 miles north and west of the capital, Porto Alegre. The Military Brigade claims to have information that "elite squads" of MST militants are planning more land invasions in the state.

17. (U) Comment: In April 2006, a Venezuelan delegation led by President Hugo Chavez visited Curitiba, capital of Parana state, at Governor Requiao's invitation. During the visit, Chavez and Requiao met with MST leader Joao Pedro Stedile, and Chavez addressed an audience of MST and Via Campesina militants, sharing his vision of socialism and the inevitable end of capitalism. While a number of Brazilian political leaders - especially in President Lula's Workers' Party (PT), with which MST is affiliated as an autonomous social movement - sympathize with MST's objectives, Requiao (Brazilian Democratic Movement Party - PMDB) is one of the few to embrace the movement so openly and encourage its lawless activities. This attitude is often cited by his opponents as a major reason the movement is so active in Parana. The fact that military police confronted the MST in Rio Grande do Sul while landowners in Parana must depend on private security guards may be one indication of differences in approach to the landless movement on the part of the two state governments. End Comment.

18. (U) This cable was cleared by Embassy Brasilia.

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